BISS Biodiversity Information Science and Standards

Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e28311
doi: 10.3897/biss.2.28311

OPEN ACCESS

Conference Abstract

The Uncertainty of Space: Keeping Cool With a Shared Freezer

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Received: 11 Jul 2018 | Published: 17 Jul 2018

Citation: Phillips C (2018) The Uncertainty of Space: Keeping Cool With a Shared Freezer. Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e28311. https://doi.org/10.3897/biss.2.28311

Abstract

Academic and heritage institutions worldwide use freezers to hold specimens, for a variety of stakeholders. At Otago Museum, the Natural Science freezer is utilised by a diverse range of organisations with widely differing end uses. As a repository for native species, Otago Museum accepts and stores specimens for possible addition to the collection, however the freezer unit is also used as a temporary holding space for material that will be used by others such as researchers, government bodies and the local community. This multi-use approach allows the museum to build and maintain important relationships beyond its walls.

One important group to whom freezer space is allocated that is unique to Otago, is the Komiti Taoka Tuku Iho (KTTI), a committee which is made up of local indigenous community (runaka), museum, city council, and government department representatives. The KTTI committee oversees the allocation of local taoka species (those with a traditional significance to the community) to primarily traditional artists, and ensures the cultural use of these very desirable species continues in a sustainable way.

Given the number of stakeholders involved, their very different objects and the impossibility of knowing exactly when specimens will arrive or when they will depart, managing a limited resource such as the Natural Science freezer can be a challenge. The issues involved in managing such an operation will be discussed, as will the significant benefits of working with local institutions and communities, with particular emphasis on the work that is done to

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assist the local runaka with decision making around specimens that hold particular cultural significance.

Keywords

Community, freezer, indigenous, relationships, shared, specimens, stakeholders, taoka

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